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# THE DI AND CONGRESS

Product Evaluation Staff  
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## SUMMARY

The Directorate of Intelligence (DI) has been providing an increasing number of oral briefings to Congress. In 1987, the DI made more than 450 presentations with topics ranging from arms control to international narcotics trafficking. The audience is almost as diverse as the subject matter--senior senators to junior staffers. Some DI offices brief more than others, but none appears to bear a debilitating burden for long.

The impetus for briefings comes almost always from Congress although some DI officers argue for a more proactive policy. The Office of Congressional Affairs (OCA) coordinates all briefing activity on the Hill.

The continuing increase in demand from the Hill for personal appearances--as well as the increasing number of requests for written materials and for DI participation in net assessments--suggests that the DI is providing good service to Congress. According to OCA staffers, Congresspeople normally are pleased with the DI effort because the briefings are relatively free from bias, are informative, and are provided by highly capable analyst-presenters.

A small portion of briefings--we estimate under ten percent--are less successful than others in fulfilling customer expectations. OCA staffers note that some sessions go awry because DI offices send unsophisticated or ill-prepared analysts. DI officers state that problems have arisen also because OCA did not provide sufficient background information to allow the analyst proper preparation or because analysts are sometimes sent when a Congressman expects a DO officer. DI people are also concerned that OCA does not intervene soon enough when Congressional questioning becomes improper.

We offer the following recommendations to enhance the DI Congressional briefing effort:

- Managers should require that their briefers are familiar with OCA guidelines on Congressional briefings and ensure that all briefers are comfortable with their subjects and well prepared.
- A greater effort should be made to educate DI personnel on the role of Congress and on techniques through new formal training opportunities and occasional OCA--and if possible--Congressional participation in office-organized management conferences.

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- OCA should increase its efforts to prepare DI briefers with information bearing on the briefings, especially topic, unwritten agenda and briefing history. All briefings on the Hill are important, and all briefers--junior and senior--deserve all available information so that they can prepare adequately.
- DI offices and NIOs should inform each other when briefings are given.
- As far as possible when NIOs present analytic positions; a DI representative should be included on the briefing teams.

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### Scope Note

This study examines the scope and quality of DI oral briefings provided to Congresspeople and their staffers. We made no effort to discern Congressional reaction to DI written material or to look into briefing material provided to support senior Agency officers presenting on the Hill.

We have sifted through DI files, conducted interviews within the DI, the Office of Congressional Affairs, and with the National Intelligence Officers (NIOs), in an attempt to discern the burden and effectiveness of the DI briefing effort. We were unable to gain access to either principals or staff on the Hill.

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## Introduction

The extent of Directorate of Intelligence (DI) activity on the Hill has paralleled the changes in the overall relationship between the CIA and Congress. During the long period when Congress's links to CIA were maintained by a few powerful legislators, the DI faced relatively infrequent requirements for oral briefings on the Hill. By the mid-1960s, the DI was providing oral briefings on such topics as the Vietnam War and nuclear proliferation, as well as on current crises and aspects of the strategic balance. But as late as 1973, representatives from all parts of the Agency provided only 175 oral briefings to Congress, virtually all at Congress's request.

In recent years, the number of oral briefings on the Hill has increased gradually. In 1987, according to OCA records, the Agency gave close to 1,000, with approximately half provided by the DI. In addition, the National Intelligence Daily and numerous other DI publications regularly are sent to the Hill.

## Why Brief?

DI Congressional briefings cost considerable time and effort. Even a short presentation--including travel and preparation--could equate to a day or more away from normal analytical chores. When crises occur, the need for DI briefers on the Hill increases substantially.

In the context of value received for CIA and DI efforts our expenditure is quite modest.

- It is CIA and DI policy to be responsive to Congressional requests for analysis. Oral briefings fulfill part of that requirement.
- Scholars note that Congress has become an increasingly prominent player in US foreign policy. For it to be denied substantial and up-to-date analysis of critical issues would lessen the ability of the US government as a whole to respond to future challenges.
- Congressmen often move from the legislative to the executive branch, hopefully carrying a legacy of good will with them.
- The DI almost never is more relevant than when it addresses the questions people want answered. We may not know if a paper is read but we certainly are aware when a briefing has been taken aboard.
- Congress rewards those who serve it well, often with increased funding.

--Finally, Congress has the ability to punish the uncooperative. The late Senator Richard Russell who was speaking about the Senate, but whose words could apply equally to the House, noted:

"There isn't a single member of this Senate that's so lowly that he can't make life unbearable for you fellows, if he decides he wants to do it."

#### Who Briefs Whom

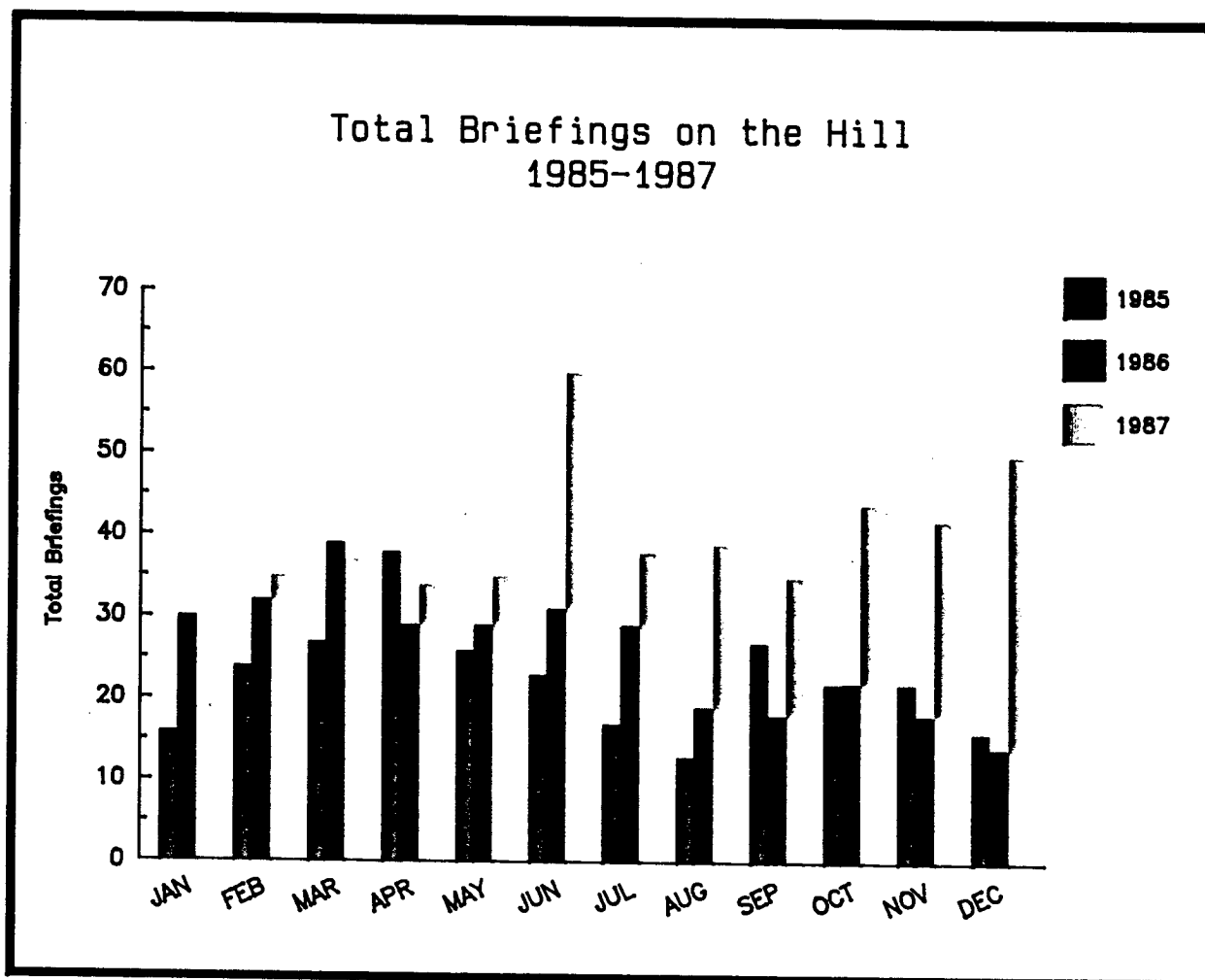
Statistics provided by the Office of Congressional Affairs (OCA) show that for 1987, the DI provided 468 briefings to Congress.\* This compares to 310 briefings for 1986 and 271 in 1985.

- On the average, the DI provides briefings on more than 20 different topics or issues per month. These range from strategic weapons, arms control, and current crises to international terrorism, technology transfer, and world oil policy.
- Arms control and Soviet strategic weapons, Iran-Iraq and the Persian Gulf, and Nicaragua and Central America were the focus of the largest numbers of briefings in 1987. Following in order were technology transfer, Angola, and the international narcotics trade.
- Senate and House staff members were the recipients of a large majority of the briefings on arms control and strategic weapons (55 of 68). In contrast, 30 of 49 briefings on the Persian Gulf were to principals as were 32 of 50 briefings on Central America. Twenty of 29 briefings on technology transfer were to principals (15 to Congressmen), but only three of 13 on Angola and three of eight on international narcotics.
- The remaining briefings range across the spectrum and are less amenable to categorizing by staff or principal interest. Many of the presentations were specially tailored for individual Congressmen, Senators, or staffers, particularly those which were designed to help prepare for upcoming trips.

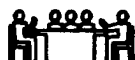
The data suggest that while some DI offices provide more presentations to the Hill than others, none bears a debilitating briefing burden for long. Congressional interest in a crisis tends to come in short, sharp bursts. Everyone vies to become

\*This total includes briefings--testimony to committees, individual presentations, discussions with staff members,--to members and Congressional staffers, debriefings, breakfast meetings, etc. It does not include briefings to the Government Accounting Office or the Congressional Research Service.

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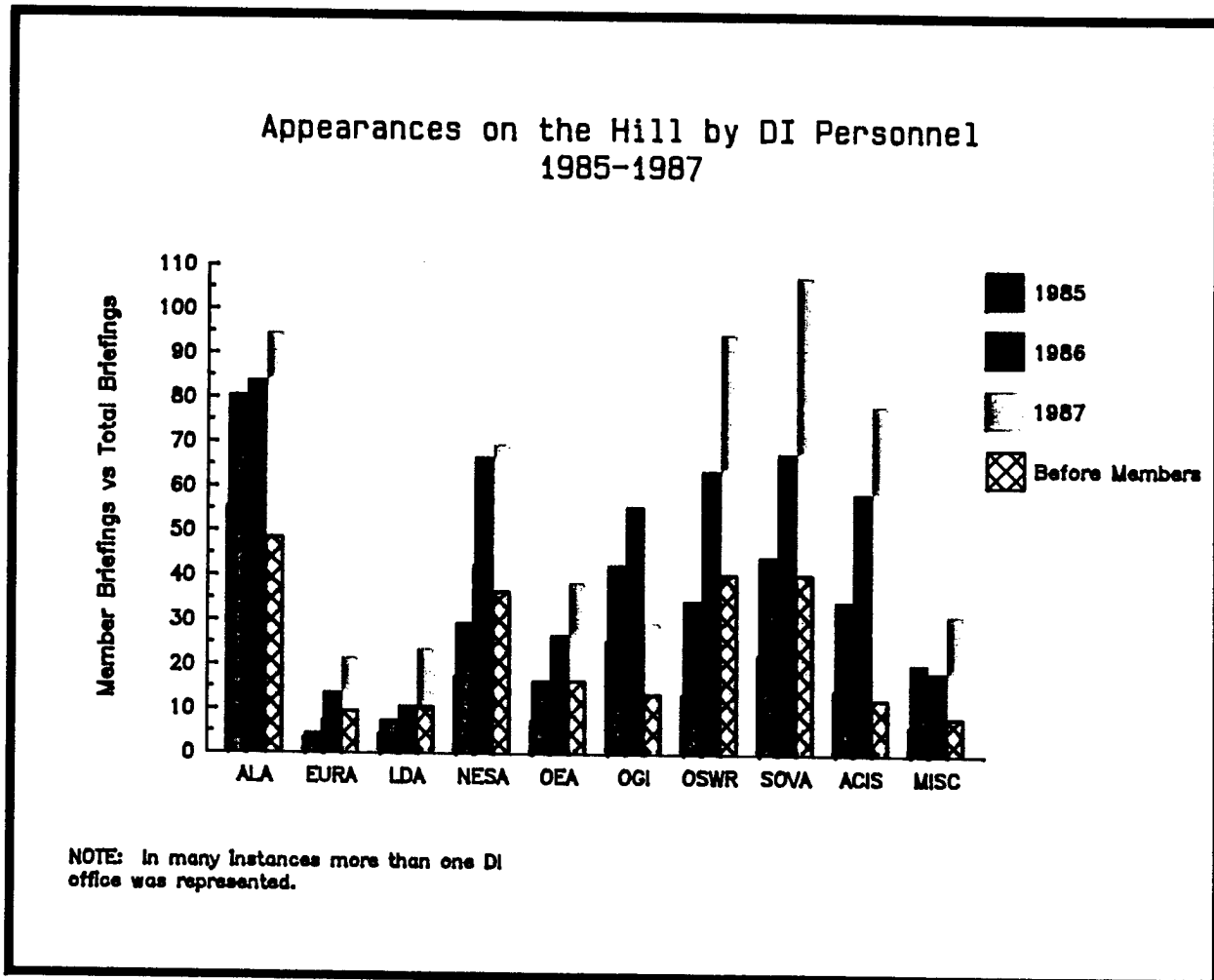
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House Members	87
House Staff	49
Senate Members	52
Senate Staff	75
Joint Members	2
Joint Staff	6



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and move on to the next one. Long-term, slower moving topics tend to be handled by staff members on a more regularized basis. Some DI managers note, however, that during a crisis their resources are sometimes stretched very thin indeed when the demand for Congressional briefings increases at the same time that analysts must cope with a greater publication responsibility and requests for executive branch and liaison briefings.

### The Audience

The Congressional audience for DI briefings is quite diverse:

- The personal staffs of Representatives or Senators, sometimes young, and fresh from graduate school, look to DI briefings for an education on a subject, different views about a topic they are already familiar with, or possibly general background information before taking a trip.
- A few senior personal staff members who have developed substantial expertise in one or more areas use DI briefings to obtain details or bring current flavor to an already solid body of information.
- Committee staff members, who specialize on particular issues, apparently also use the DI to obtain detailed information on various important topics, especially arms control and strategic weapons.
- Senators or Representatives on "foreign policy" committees, including members of the Intelligence Oversight Committees, Foreign Relations (Senate) and Foreign Affairs (House), the Military Committees of the Senate and House, and Subcommittees of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees get full and frequent briefings either individually or in formal hearings.
- Senators or Congressmen on non foreign policy committees are briefed on an increasing number of topics that have an international aspect warranting CIA attention, but have not been traditional subjects for Intelligence. For example, the DI now has an important responsibility to brief on the international narcotics trade.

### The Origin of Briefings

In virtually all cases, the impetus for briefings come from the Hill. Our conversations suggest that many DI managers believe they should not take the initiative in suggesting topics for briefings. This view apparently is shared by most National Intelligence Officers (NIOs) as well.

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Some DI people think that this relatively passive approach is not helpful in an era where Congress has become such a prominent foreign policy player. They suggest that we should make more of an effort to market our product, particularly when we have unique information or especially good analysis. The contrary view, however, is that we are already providing a substantial and expanding service to the Hill and there is no need to push to increase the burden. Moreover, a vigorous effort to sell the product might be misconstrued as an effort to promote a particular policy.

### The Process

Agency policy dictates that the Office of Congressional Affairs (OCA) orchestrate dealings with Congress. Normally a staff person on the Hill calls OCA first; when a DI office or an NIO is contacted directly, OCA is informed of the pending briefing at the earliest opportunity. In most cases, OCA will make the primary determination of who to contact for a particular briefing.

OCA respondents in our survey indicated that the selection of responsibility for the briefing ordinarily is not difficult. Requests for substantive briefings go to the DI, those for operational briefings to the DO, and requests for Community opinion to the NIOs. Where overlap occurs, more than one entity is called. OCA ordinarily does not ask for a particular briefer when dealing with DI offices. Sometimes OCA quietly informs the offices when it is evident an individual is not skilled or comfortable on the Hill. The responsibility for selection is usually assumed by the office director or someone he designates. Also, a form of "natural selection" takes place. Articulate people, who are confident of their ability to brief, vie to present on the Hill. Those who are not as comfortable can generally opt out. The result is that Congress usually gets the DI's best presenters. This is especially important because little formal training is provided to DI presenters on the Hill. (See Box)

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### Training on Congressional Relations

Very little formal training provided to junior analysts to prepare them for presenting on the Hill and only limited offerings for more senior DI people. The Office of Training seems to do the most for officers in the SIS who presumably are those who need such training the least. Following are some of the types of training available that help DI officers better understand the relationship with Congress.

- Advanced Intelligence Seminar. One small section deals with Congress, but OTE is planning to expand and strengthen it.
- Mid-Career Course. The former Director of OCA asked for several hours to focus directly on Congress. The request apparently was approved.
- CIA and Congress. Participants identify as a strong and most useful OTE course. It is restricted to SISers and GS-15s on the fast track.
- Resource Decisions and Congress. Another excellent offering for SISers.
- Harvard's eight week program for senior officials in national security. Covers a number of different topics, but attendees note that section on Congress is quite useful. Attendees are from the SIS.
- Congressional Quarterly holds a day-long seminar about the Hill on the Hill; we have not had anyone attend as yet.

OCA provides the topic, the time and place of the briefing, who it is for--committee, individual members, or for staff--and any other details it deems relevant. OCA has praised the ability of DI offices to give prompt and effective responses.

Although several NIOs indicate that if they believe a briefing is more appropriate for the DI, they defer, coordination between NIOs and DI Offices is not regularized. How well they interact depends on the proclivities of the principals and how cordial is the relationship. Even when the relationship is very good, the offices and the NIOs do not see the need to let each other know of every occasion they brief on the Hill and on what topics.

When an NIO briefs on the Hill, he will usually bring along analysts from the DI, DIA, and State. Sometimes, the NIO will not have a DI representative accompany him and instead will personally represent the DI view. He normally would not presume to articulate the positions of other agencies.

Office practices vary in selecting briefers for appearances on the Hill. Most often the office director or deputy supported by analysts conduct full committee briefings. For individual members or staff, the perceived sensitivity of the topic, the prominence of the audience, the reason for the briefing, and the schedules and personalities of managers determine who does a presentation. In instances where a junior person is selected to brief members, common office practice is that a DI manager accompanies the analyst.

OCA's role is important in ensuring successful briefings. Once a briever is selected, OCA staffers provide information such as the rationale for the briefing, any underlying questions, and any "hidden agendas." During the briefing, OCA is responsible for ensuring that:

- All of the staff members have appropriate clearances.
- A record is kept of formal testimony so that the presenter is not misquoted later.
- Follow-up questions are answered promptly.
- Briefers are not harassed.

#### Quality of DI Briefings

The most powerful evidence that the DI is providing a high-quality useful product to the Hill is the fact that Congress continues to ask for more briefings on more topics more often. One former Congressman we interviewed emphasized that people on the Hill had an incredible number of demands on their time and would not willingly expend it on a briefing unless they thought it would be really useful. A respondent who served many years on

the Hill noted that even those people most in opposition to CIA's covert actions, were the first to call on the Agency for briefings.

Senior people in CIA's Office of Congressional Affairs judge that the DI almost always provides excellent briefings to the Hill. "The DI makes money for the whole Agency." Since OCA's own reputation is itself hostage to the quality of support provided by other Agency components, particularly the DI, it has strong incentive to provide fair appraisal. OCA's high marks for DI congressional briefings and briefers are seconded by all of the NIOs with whom we spoke.

Various respondents noted that the DI is appreciated because it provides information and analysis as free from bias as possible, and its briefings often contain the special insights available from sensitive sources and from analysts with in depth experience on an area. In some instances, no other intelligence organization or even government component is engaged in similar research. DI briefers have also been complemented for their less formal approach to presentations; for example, briefing without formal notes and dispensing with, as much as possible, complicated viewgraphs.

#### When We Are Less Successful....

Our investigations suggest that a small portion of briefings fail to satisfy their audiences. In looking at this problem, we have tried to differentiate between a situation where the recipients of the briefing do not like the message, and one where there is a less satisfactory than usual presentation. If a briefing is objective, based on solid analysis, and well presented, it should be judged a success no matter the reaction of the audience. Making such a distinction, however, is extremely difficult particularly in the absence of empirical data from consumers themselves. While our respondents generally agree on the elements of failed briefings, in many instances they cited different causes.

- Some briefings go badly when the DI presenters face a Congressional audience that is convinced that CIA has become an apologist for administration policy or that the Agency slants intelligence. We heard of occasional complaints from the Hill that some analysts have been caught up in enthusiasm for various Agency covert action projects.
- OCA respondents note problems with the selection of briefers. DI offices appear to view certain briefings on the Hill as important--warranting top flight briefers--and others less so--entitled to the second string. Such a determination is a ticket to disaster and all briefings on the Hill must be treated as worthy of our best effort.

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- Problems sometimes arise when relatively junior people, new to the Agency and somewhat unsophisticated, are sent to brief important members of Congress. While these individuals are usually well-grounded in their subjects and "aim to please," they may: offer too much information, prescribe policy, not be as careful as they should be about sources and methods, or talk about work in progress before final analytical judgments have been determined.
- On occasion, DI briefers arrived on the Hill not as well prepared on a subject as they should have been. Moreover, not all people are compelling briefers.
- Some DI office managers noted that briefings occasionally go awry because of lapses in communication. These managers have the impression that OCA staffers are inconsistent in their willingness to fully brief managers and analysts. On occasion, people arrived on the Hill prepared to brief on the wrong topic.
- Many DI people chided OCA for not intervening soon enough, or at all, when DI people were being mistreated unfairly on the Hill. Mid-level and more junior people bore the brunt, in particular, because they were often accompanied by equally junior and less politically savvy OCA representatives. OCA staffers are likely to contrast the rather gentle handling of DI to the far rougher treatment afforded to representatives from many policy agencies and departments, and especially the DO. This isn't much solace to a DI analyst who thinks that he has just been given a tough time on the Hill.

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## Recommendations

We believe a few relatively minor actions would improve further the briefing effort.

- OCA has recently published guidelines on Congressional briefings; the offices should ensure that their briefers review them regularly before making presentations on the Hill.
- The Office of Training should structure a one- or two-day course on the DI and Congress, perhaps modeled, in part, on the widely praised program for SIS-level officers. This course would explain the role of Congress, emphasize DI efforts and responsibilities, and, as much as possible, provide hints on overcoming the special problems and pitfalls encountered during briefings on the Hill.
- DI managers should more often invite OCA officers to bring representatives from the Hill to office management conferences for sessions on the DI performance in dealing with Congress.
- DI offices managers should ensure that any briefers going to the Hill are comfortable with their subjects, well-grounded in the standards of conduct for presentations on the Hill, and always well-prepared.
- OCA should increase its efforts to provide DI briefers--especially those inexperienced in Hill appearances--with information bearing on the briefing. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that the exact topic of the briefing is made clear to the briefer, discerning any unwritten agendas, if possible, and spelling them out ahead of time, and providing a briefing history if there is one.
- DI offices should ensure that other concerned DI components and NIOs are notified whenever a briefing is to be given on the Hill; NIOs should offer the same courtesy to the DI.
- If a community briefing team headed by an NIO goes to the Hill, a DI representative should be included as a matter of course.